

Top 3 Campus Card Innovations for a Thriving Student Experience



INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions are focused on creating a dynamic student experience as they adapt and evolve to support the shifting cultural and technology landscape. Today, the diverse population of students attending higher education institutions is seeking flexibility, convenience, technology, and security in new ways. Colleges and universities are finding the ability to support the unique needs of each student while providing an engaging, entertaining, safe, and modern experience improves student success and enables the institution to attract and retain the best and brightest students.

A study conducted by Porter Research found that because the stakes are so high in the battle to draw top students, improving the student experience is a top-ranked strategic goal in higher education. Diving deeper, the research found that innovating the campus card program directly benefits the student experience. By implementing cutting-edge technology and engaging programs through their campus card, institutions can improve convenience and enhance the student experience in a way that creates a competitive advantage.

The comprehensive study was conducted in October 2018 and included 75 higher education leaders, 200 students currently enrolled in a 4-year or 2-year educational institution, and 200 parents with a student currently enrolled in a 4-year or 2-year

educational institution. In addition, the research included an online focus group with 12 leaders of higher education institutions. This white paper will share insight revealed through the research, including key ways institutions are advancing their campus card programs to benefit the student experience.

DEFINING THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The student experience is a theme focused on throughout higher education. Ever-evolving, the student experience is shaped by the culture, administration, academics, attitudes, programs, tools, and environment around student life. It can be impacted by technology, convenience, facilities,

The student experience is not just about their time in the classroom, but also their time outside of the classroom. We want to engage them in a meaningful way and have that experience of being a part of the campus. The long-term benefit is that when they graduate, they still feel that commitment to the campus. The short-term benefit is that while they are here, they stay more engaged in their class, which helps their GPA, and it helps recruitment.

Vice President, Large Public University



and more. As leaders shift to view their organizations as companies and students as consumers, they find themselves aiming to solve challenges of consumerism and demand. As a result, student experience becomes first and foremost when aiming to gain a competitive edge. Participants revealed many different views of the student experience held across institutions in the United States. While various views abound, a consistent theme was that student experience is a top-ranked strategic goal because of the significant impact on a school's ability to attract students. In fact, 96% of participants ranked student experience as either "very important" or "extremely important" when asked about their most important strategic goals.

THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE & CAMPUS CARD PROGRAMS

Campus card programs and credentials impact every aspect of the student experience. From the moment a student enrolls, campus credentials become an integral part of life. Students receive their campus credentials when they arrive to school and can immediately enter buildings or purchase meals. Either way, the process directly impacts early impressions of the institution. As they progress, students use their campus card for everything from entering buildings, to signing up for class, to attending events.

Because campus credentials are integral to these fundamental activities, 69% of participants indicated the campus card plays a major role in contributing to a positive student experience. As institutions continue to innovate and evolve, the campus card will play an even greater role in the future as 88% of participants indicated campus cards will play a major role in the next 3-5 years.

An Integral Part of Campus Life

All participants surveyed currently have campus credentials, demonstrating the strength and importance of ID card programs across the country. An essential component of student life, it is important for leaders to understand the health of and evolve use of their campus card programs to enhance the student experience.

The study found that 97% of institutions believe the campus card program is holding steady or is healthy as it ever has been. Today, most students are using campus cards to open or unlock campus doors (49%), to pay for on-campus dining (49%), and to attend on-campus events (44%). Both students and institution leaders were also asked to indicate the campus card services most valuable to them. Students indicated on-campus dining to be most valuable while higher education institution leaders indicated access control to be the most important.



ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY FOR GREATER CONVENIENCE

As higher education leaders evolve current campus cards usage, they are looking to technology to shape a convenient, automated, and personalized experience for their consumer – the student. This trend is driving the shift from credentials that are predominantly accessed through cards, to digital credentials that can be accessed through new technology.

Today's students live and breathe technology. They expect on-demand, convenient, and modern processes and tools in all aspects of the student experience. To address demand, institutions are extending that experience to digital credentials. Students no longer walk from one end of campus to the other or wait in long lines to sign up for services. They expect conveniences like uploading their own photo for their campus card and using their mobile device to access amenities, meal plans, and events.

When asked what new campus card capabilities the institution plans to implement, participants indicated easier, more secure access to facilities (51%), new technology to advance the use of campus cards (i.e. hand scanners, biometrics, mobile) (46%), and new services for use with campus cards (43%).

Digging deeper into these responses, the study uncovered three key trends when it comes to how institutions are reinvigorating the student experience:

1. Many institutions are investing in new facilities and technology to enable navigating the physical campus to become faster and safer.
2. Digital credentials via next gen technology such as biometrics and mobile tools are replacing the traditional card.
3. Students are being rewarded to drive use of on-campus services and classroom attendance.

Navigating the Campus Faster, Safer, Easier

The research found institutions are investing in new facilities to support growing student populations, and to attract students and partnerships. Many are constructing new buildings that promote innovation centers and incubators with state-of-the-art capabilities. Others are renovating housing and libraries in a way that fosters collaboration, progressive thinking, and convenience. Current events are also driving institutions to invest in security improvements.



Updating physical access is a large investment as buildings are refurbished and many new ones are being built. We are also in the middle of a program to add access to every external door on campus.

Director at a Large Private University

These factors are leading institutions to seek new technology that improves convenience, efficiency, and safety of building access control. Managing access is a key component of campus card programs. In fact, 100% of participants believe card or mobile access usage will remain the same or increase in the next 3-5 years, with 77% believing it will increase.

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Along with state-of-the-art facilities, institutions are stepping up the keyless access capabilities. Many are making the move to contactless cards, as well as mobile readers that leverage digital credentials on all buildings. Also, touchless biometric access in high volume locations speeds entry and exit while eliminating exchange of germs.

The Next Gen Campus Card

In addition to modernizing facilities and door access, institutions are looking to innovative ways to move from the traditional card across all campus services. While many next gen capabilities are available, most are finding fingerprint biometrics and mobile technology to be the most convenient, easy to implement, cost effective, and desirable. Almost half of decision makers say they have plans to implement use of biometrics and mobile apps to access digital credentials.

Similarly, most students prefer credentials on mobile devices. When asked what the student would prefer to use over the campus card, almost half (42%) indicated credentials on their mobile device. Because students have become accustomed to most daily activity at their fingertips, they desire campus card credentials to follow. Other technologies preferred by students include eye scanning technology (10%), touchless (hand-wave) technology (7%), facial recognition (4%) and voice recognition (3%).

As campus card programs evolve, activities such as food ordering in dining halls via mobile devices will become an essential tool for students. Next gen digital credentials will enable students to check into classes and events using mobile devices or biometric scanners. Taking technology a step further,



institutions are already implementing automated classroom attendance tracking via geo-fencing and Bluetooth.

These capabilities allow institutions to create a connected campus. By integrating all campus activities such as building access, library book check-out, meal plans, and declining balance, students can leverage a single credential throughout campus. Providing the seamless, convenient experience of a connected campus improves the student experience in a way that can further contribute to attracting top performing students.

As leaders deliberate the best options for their campus, it is prudent to consider ease of use and implementation. Some participants noted potential challenges with mobile apps including supporting multiple platforms and a concern that not all students may have mobile devices. Alternatively, use of biometrics provides access for students regardless of personal device ownership and eliminates the potential issue of a mobile devices getting lost.

In addition, participants noted budget to be a challenge when it comes to innovating campus card programs, indicating many technologies can be cost prohibitive. Organizations seeking to implement these technologies should evaluate the value and long-term benefits associated with technology enhancements. By replacing outdated systems, implementing

technology that improves efficiencies across campus, and enabling integration across housing, dining, and more, institutions realize strong financial return. The right technology can drive significant return on investment when purposefully implemented as part of a student experience strategy.

Rewards for the Win

As institutions place greater emphasis on creating more on-campus amenities, incentives are being offered for patronage to on-campus services. Loyalty programs that have built devoted customer bases are now finding a place in higher education. These programs enable organizations to increase revenue, while also enhancing convenience for students and cultivating the on-campus student experience. Through incentivizing students to make purchases at on-campus dining and shops, attend class, and join events, loyalty programs benefit the student experience, academic success, and the institutional strategic objectives.

Students expressed enthusiasm for loyalty programs. When asked how likely students would be to use new campus card services, loyalty programs to receive rewards for activities received the top score with an average rating of 4 on a scale of 1-5. Also, 85% of students indicated use of loyalty programs will remain the same or increase in the next few years.



Another consideration, over half of higher education decision makers indicated use of the campus card for classroom attendance tracking (51%) and for event attendance tracking (64%) will increase in the next 3-5 years. In addition, both students and parents indicated they would like to see loyalty programs used for these types of activities. Through these programs, parents can also be provided with visibility to spending trends and classroom attendance, capabilities found to desired by 66% and 61% of parents respectively.

As institutions contemplate rewards to leverage as incentives, it is important to consider student preferences to achieve desired results. When asked what type of rewards they would be excited about receiving as part of the campus card loyalty program, students indicated discounts for on-campus dining (62%), school merchandise (58%) and special event tickets (58%).

Gaining a Competitive Edge

The higher education student population continues to evolve both culturally and technologically, and institutions are focused on staying in lock-step with their consumer – the student. The shifting landscape requires institutions to continually evolve programs to support the student experience and campus card programs are the cornerstone of the student

experience. To advance the campus card program, here is how institutions should start:

1. Determine current initiatives related to the student experience: Where is the institution investing? New facilities, incubators and partnerships, on-campus programs, events, and athletics?

2. Assess how the campus card program can support these initiatives: Will biometric access promote the modernization of new facilities and improve safety? Are there opportunities to leverage loyalty programs to increase participation in new programs or events? Can the transition from traditional card to mobile app improve convenience and increase use of new on-campus dining options?

3. Evaluate the value and benefits of new technology: Quantify the value of improving the student experience and convenience as well as eliminating outdated technology. Cutting edge technology impacts the experience and perception of the institution creating value as a tool for attracting top students. How can new technology become an asset to your strategic goals?

As institutions innovate their campus card programs, they can gain a competitive edge and attract and retain the best and brightest students. As a result, organizations can make their mark as a top tier institution.



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